

Municipal Council Workshop  
January 20, 2005  
Town Hall Auditorium

President McMilleon called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

Members present: Joseph McMilleon, Anne Larnard, Esther Headley, Robert Woodsom, James Chandler, Mario Pinierio, Anne Connolly King and Christopher Lawrence. Roger Benson had an excused absence.

President McMilleon read Rule 4 into the record and reminded the Council that whatever is discussed as a rule change would still need to be presented to the Municipal Council at a regular meeting for a first reading and referred to Rules and Procedures before the Council could vote on any changes.

He stated the first thing on the agenda was his bill 2004-42 was to take the public hearing out of the Rules & Procedures committee and put it back to the municipal council meeting. He would ask that it be brought back to the Council for a vote. He stated it was a change that he had discussed more than a year ago to not have the public hearing in the finance committee and to have it just be an open discussion at that time and then when it went back to the council the public hearing will be held then. This would give the public a chance to ask questions at both the finance committee and at the public hearing at the Council meeting.

He then asked Councilor King and Councilor Larnard to go over the proposals that they had submitted to the Council for the workshop.

Councilor King explained she and Councilor Larnard would like to co-present something they wanted to bring up for discussion. She stated they were open for thoughts from everybody. They wanted to bring it up in this forum because they wanted to talk about it with the Council before they presented to the rules and regulations because they wanted to see what input other Councilors could give them on it. Throughout the year the Council has heard from residents that there has been a concern that the Council has lost the system of checks and balances. This proposal is to try to put in a system to restore that check and balance system within the context of staying within a city form of government.

Marc Deschenes asked what type of forum this meeting was.

Councilor McMilleon explained it's a workshop for the Municipal Council that is done annually to review the rules and procedures that are in place and have an informal discussion about whether there are any thoughts or possibilities of changing any of the rules and procedures.

Mr. Deschenes asked if what was to be discussed at this workshop would normally have been brought up at a prior council meeting and then brought to this workshop.

Councilor McMilleon stated that historically that had not been the process. He explained if anything came out of this discussion it would have to be presented to the full council as a first reading and then go through the normal process. The workshop is for discussion only and nothing can or will be voted on at this meeting.

Mr. Deschenes stated that no one from the public knew this was being discussed.

Mrs. Kitchin stated this was a posted rules and procedures workshop for the Council to go over their rules and discuss what if anything needed tweaking or if they were satisfied with the way things were.

Mr. McMilleon reiterated that no decisions would be made at this meeting and that it was an opportunity to share thoughts and information. This is a preliminary discussion on the proposal and a lengthy discussion should not take place until it has become a formal proposal submitted to the Council.

Councilor Larnard stated that this isn't a new idea. There has been discussion of making changes for about a year but the understanding was that the changes would be discussed and made when the council reorganized and went over the rules and procedures. She stated that's what they were doing now discussing the changes and then they would make a formal proposal.

Councilor Connolly King gave a summary of the proposal with changes to include, Council meeting twice a month as well as the finance subcommittee to meet in the time between the two council meetings; finance committee would be a subcommittee of the council consisting of three Municipal Councilors and two Amesbury residents; the public hearing would take place at the Council meeting; the finance subcommittee and council members would all be provided with a reference binder to file all pertinent, current Town financial documents.